


Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

May 2, 2002

TDH Honors



TDH School Health Web Site Wins Gold Award.

The TDH School Health staff have earned the Nursing Excellence Gold Award presented by Nurse-recruiter.com for their outstanding web site. The award is given for best practices in the display of nursing as a profession as well as for content and design. The award can be seen at: <http://nurse-recruiter.com/goldsites.html> For more information, contact Michelle McComb, Coordinator, School Health Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3307 or e-mail michelle.mccomb@tdh.state.tx.us.



Hepatitis C PSA Wins Creative Summit Award

The Hepatitis C television public service announcement, *Knife Thrower*, has won a Silver award from the Portland-based International Creative Summit Group. The Summit group recognizes outstanding television campaigns costing less than \$15 million including public service campaigns. For more information, contact Alma Thompson, Hepatitis C Program Specialist, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6364 or e-mail Alma.Thompson@tdh.state.tx.us



Trust for America's Health Report.

The Texas Birth Defects registry was given the highest rating (A) by Trust for America's Health in a report released in February 2002. States were rated according to their capacity for Tracking; Data Use, Prevention, and Research; Data Sharing; and Legislation and Resources. Texas received "Good" to "Better" in most capacity subcategories, with a notable exception of "Below Minimum" in timeliness. The Trust for America's Health is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to protect the health and safety of all communities, especially those most at risk of environmental and other public health threats. The full text of the report and state-specific fact sheets are available on the TFAH Web site at <http://healthyamericans.org/state/birthdefects/>. For more information, or copies of the conference proceedings and news articles, contact Amy Case, at (512) 458-7232 or e-mail amy.case@tdh.state.tx.us.

TDH Hot Topics



Recall Order.

TDH has issued a Recall Order to a food manufacturing and wholesaling establishment located in Houston. Inspections conducted by the Manufactured Foods Division revealed the firm failed to have proper production/quality control records; the firm had misbranded and adulterated food products in commerce; and the firm failed to license with the TDH. An immediate recall of products was ordered. For more information contact Derek Jakovich, Licensing and Enforcement Division, Bureau of Food and Drug Safety, at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail derek.jakovich@tdh.state.tx.us.



Community Forums Encourage Dialogue on Obesity Plan.

Staff members in the Bureau of Nutrition Services are holding community forums around Texas to gather feedback on proposed goals for a statewide plan to address obesity in children and families. Six of the ten forums have been held and have provided valuable information. Community stakeholders were identified by regional staff members and invited to the forums. The Statewide Obesity Task Force will review this information and adjust their goals and objectives accordingly. Forums are being held in San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, Falfurrias, Palestine, Waxahachie, El Paso, Lubbock, Round Rock and San Marcos. The task force and forums are supported through a 3-year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *For more information, contact Barbara Keir, Public Health Nutrition and Education Bureau of Nutrition Services, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2144 or e-mail barbara.keir@tdh.state.tx.us.*



United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in the case Frew v. Gilbert, et al.

On April 2, oral argument was heard by a panel of the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in the case Frew v. Gilbert, et al. Philip Lionberger, Deputy Solicitor General, argued the state's position that the state's sovereign immunity shields it from the relief ordered by the district court in its August 2000 order and that the district court had no jurisdiction over the supplemental complaint because these issues were addressed in the primary lawsuit. A decision by the court is not expected for at least six months.

This class action lawsuit was first filed in 1993 on behalf of more than 1.5 million indigent children who are entitled to health benefits through the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program (EPSDT), a part of the Medicaid program established under federal and state laws. In Texas, the program is called *the Texas Health Steps Program*. The parties entered into a consent decree in 1996. In 1998, Plaintiffs filed a motion to enforce the consent decree, and the motion was heard by the district court in May 2000.

The state filed an appeal of the August 2000 decision by the district court that found that defendants had not effectively informed recipients about the Texas Health Steps Program or adequately ensured the provision of medical and dental checkups, particularly to recipients enrolled in managed care. The court also found that the defendants have not provided medical case management services throughout the state or the required training of health care providers. The state also appealed the ruling by the court not to dismiss plaintiff's supplemental complaint alleging that the State of Texas failed to adequately provide dental services to EPSDT recipients. *For more information, contact Linda Wiegman, Deputy General Counsel, at 512-458-7236 or e-mail linda.wiegman@tdh.state.tx.us.*



WIC and Child Nutrition Program Hearings.

USDA Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services held an outreach meeting in San Antonio on April 10 to gather information for the reauthorization of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and other child nutrition programs planned for FY03. Fifty organizations and stakeholders were invited to testify. Speaking on behalf of TDH were WIC nutritionists Barbara Keir and Mary Van Eck. Melanie Ritsema, WIC Director from San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, also testified. Issues included: (1) adequate funding for the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, (2) classifying donor human milk as a reimbursable WIC food item, (3) adequate funding for management information systems, (4) un-funded mandates such as

voter registration, (5) recruitment and retention efforts for qualified staff, (6) continued support for breast pump purchases with food funds, (7) expediting changes in WIC foods, (8) allowing waivers for states to make their food packages culturally competent, (9) supporting state education efforts to address obesity, (10) allowing states flexibility in the use of their education funds if they have cost-effective food packages, and (11) support for WIC as a discretionary-funded program. *For more information, contact Mike Montgomery, Chief, Bureau of Nutrition Services, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3408 or e-mail mike.montgomery@tdh.state.tx.us.*



A Change in Travel.

In early March, all major airlines except Southwest Airlines cut their travel agency commission rate to zero. Because the State of Texas does not pay fees directly to travel agencies, most travel contractors with the Texas Building and Procurement commission (TBPC) terminated their contracts with the state, including our TDH travel contractor, Affordable Travel. TDH is required to use a TBPC vendor. The TDH Travel Office immediately implemented an interim plan allowing employees or program designees to book directly with state-contracted airlines or to contact the Travel Office. Neither the Travel Office nor TDH users have experienced any problems with this plan. On April 11, TDH formalized an arrangement with TBPC travel contractor National Travel Systems (NTS) of Amarillo to provide travel services. Travel services with NTS began April 22. *For more information, contact John Burlinson, at (512) 458-7738 or e-mail john.burlinson@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Disease Outbreaks / Investigations



Cancer Investigation Meeting.

The meeting with Corpus Christi's *Citizen's for Environmental Justice* has been rescheduled for early May. Senator Carlos F. Truan has requested a meeting with the Commissioner, TDH staff and citizens to discuss continuing questions regarding birth defects and cancer rates in areas of Nueces County. *For more information, contact Melanie Williams, at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail melanie.williams@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pertussis Deaths in PHR 11.

In March a pair of 1-month-old Hispanic twins in Region 11 succumbed to pertussis. Symptoms included paroxysmal cough, inspiratory whoop, post-tussive vomiting, apnea, cyanosis, and pneumonia. Twin A had been seen at a clinic one week prior to her death for congestion and bronchiolitis. After this visit, her condition appeared to be improving. Her condition deteriorated, however, and she was seen in the emergency room of a local hospital, and was then transferred to a regional hospital. Twin B was hospitalized in the same local hospital for respiratory distress two days prior to death and then due to her worsening condition was transported to the regional hospital where she died within half an hour of arrival. Her sister then arrived and died six hours later. A specimen taken from twin A was DFA negative for pertussis, but the culture specimen yielded an isolate that has been presumptively identified as pertussis. Both parents were born in Mexico and report a history of childhood pertussis vaccination. The mother had been coughing since January prior to the birth of the twins. Their father and 1-year-old sibling are asymptomatic. *For more Information, contact Laura Tabony or David Bastis, Immunization Division, Surveillance and Epidemiology Program, at (512) 458-7284, or e-mail laura.tabony@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hantavirus Case Uncovered in Lubbock.

The cause of death of a 27-year-old Lubbock man in February has been confirmed as Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS). It is the second confirmed case of Hantavirus diagnosed in Lubbock County and the first death. TDH staff members will be assisting with the Lubbock Health Department's environmental assessment in the wake of the death. Because the death was not reported until March, an investigation will also be conducted to determine why the disease was not reported to TDH or Lubbock Health Department officials until over a month after the victim's death. *For more information, contact Dr. James Alexander, Regional Zoonosis veterinarian, at (806) 655-7151, or e-mail james.alexander@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rabies Reports.

Zoonosis Control PHR 2/3 has had 171 cases of rabies in animals reported as of January 1, 2002. In 2001 at this time there were 238 cases of rabies-infected animals reported in PHR 2/3. The majority of animals infected are skunks and it appears this trend is moving east and south from the cases reported last year. During April 02, the skunk strain of rabies has spilled over into a horse and cow in Navarro County and a raccoon in Wilbarger County. On April 5th, Dr. Connie Lindley, Zoonosis Control Veterinarian, participated in the University of North Texas Health Science Center, Research conference by judging faculty and student, Public Health Research posters and presentations. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley, at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Investigation at local Grocery Store.

PHR 2/3 Manufactured Foods Division performed an investigation at a local Arlington grocery store that resulted in detention of all foods in the facility and in the issuance of an emergency order temporarily closing the establishment due to rodent infestation. The firm was allowed to reopen after disposing of contaminated foods, increasing pest control activities, and making repairs to the facility. The case was referred to the Dallas Attorney General's Office. PHR 2/3 Manufactured Foods Division also responded to a chemical fire in Fort Worth that affected a local food manufacturer and a school system foods warehouse. Affected firms disposed of contaminated foods and performed cleanups as appropriate. *For more information, contact, Seri Lang at (817) 264-4700 or e-mail seri.lang@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Program Updates



Survey of Organizational Excellence.

The results of the recently completed Survey of Organizational Excellence have been presented to Executive Team and various result report formats are being prepared for distribution to Associate Commissioners and Regional/Hospital Directors. Twenty-four focus groups are scheduled in May and will include regions. Objectives for the focus groups are to validate the survey results, prioritize issues, and generate suggestions for interventions. Reports from the focus groups will be presented to Executive Team around the end of May. Summary results have been posted on the Web and complete results will be posted after focus groups are complete. We have also posted an e-mail address for questions and/or comments. *For more information, contact Robin Scott, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6114, or e-mail robin.scott@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Achieves Representative Results

For the first time in Texas, the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System are representative of the entire Texas public high school student population (Grades 9 through 12). Results are representative because Texas achieved adequate participation by schools and students. The data has just been received by TDH and results will be disseminated in May and June. The Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention coordinated implementation of the YRBSS for 2001. *For more information, contact Dr Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention at (512) 458-7200 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Safe Riders To Provide More Safety Seats

Safe Riders announced in April that they will provide 19,860 children with safety seats this year. This is the greatest number of seats ever provided by the program. The seats are for low-income children and will be distributed two ways: 1) Safe Riders Distribution Program (3,281 seats) and 2) Regional Advisory Committee (RAC)/EMS system for distribution (16,579 seats) through check ups and distribution through agencies in the RAC. Seats are paid for through funding from the Texas Department of Transportation. *For more in formation contact Susan Warren at (512) 458-7403 or e-mail susan.warren@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Anti-Tobacco Events.

DUCK anti-tobacco events in February included appearances and educational activities at the Houston Festival for Little Hearts (a children's event), the Port Arthur Mardi Gras, and the Houston Livestock and Rodeo. *For more information, contact Dr Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention at (512) 458-7200 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HHSAS Financials Implementation.

Post-implementation efforts have continued to address issues as they are identified as well as to further improve the functionality of the system and enhance the skills of users. These efforts, which include the retention and transformation of key members of the implementation team into a production support team, will remain in place and continue as needed as we move from an implementation mode to an operational mode.

In February, key end-users were reconvened to provide further training and assistance so that they could function as subject matter experts in their departments to provide support closer to the end users. They have the advantage of working in the same functional areas and have a better familiarity with the end users and the types of issues they face. Follow-up meetings have been held with every organizational unit in TDH, where all end users were brought together with their management and their subject matter experts present to discuss any issues they had, to ensure everyone in TDH knew the subject matter experts in their area, and to ensure everyone was aware of the informational tools available on the website. A tracking log was maintained to ensure that any questions or problems not resolved at the time would be subsequently researched and answers provided. *For more information, contact Paul Roch, at (512) 458-7674 or e-mail paul.roch@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Funding Formula Meeting.

On March 21, staff from the TB Elimination Division met with representatives of regional and local health departments to discuss modifications to the TB funding formula. *For more information contact Jeff Taylor, TB Elimination Division, (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jeff.taylor@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Mexican Health System Site Visit.

On April 8-10, a staff member from the TB Elimination Division attended a site visit in Mexico City sponsored by the Mexican Office of Foreign Relations, the Mexican Secretary of Health, and the US-Mexico Border Health Commission. The visit was designed to give 35 attendees from US Border States an overview of how the Mexican health system functions. Topics covered related to immigrants' health, trends in Mexico-US migration, and guided visits to the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), Institute for Insurance of Social Services for State Workers (ISSSTE), hospitals, universities and research centers. *For more information, contact Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division, (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Residential Soil Sampling.

Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology Division received data for the residential soil sampling from El Paso (arsenic and lead contamination). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has asked TDH to review the data and make a public health determination. Co-Director of Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology Division will begin looking at the data and will coordinate with EPA, Agency for Toxic Substance & Disease Registry and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission with respect to appropriate follow-up health actions. *For more information, contact John Villanacci, at (512) 458-7269 or email john.villanacci@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Restoration of Regions 2 and 4 to Birth Defects Registry.

Due to funding made from the Preventive Health Block Grant, TBDMD surveillance staff will be resuming data collection in regions 2 and 4. The program had planned to curtail activities in these areas beginning with 2001 births. *For more information, contact Mark Canfield, at 458-7232 or e-mail mark.canfield@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Perinatal HIV Social Marketing Project.

Focus groups with women of childbearing age with HIV infection or at high risk for HIV infection were conducted in Houston, Lufkin and Nacogdoches in March by SUMA Market Research for the Perinatal HIV Social Marketing Project. The women were questioned about their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors regarding HIV, pregnancy and prenatal care. Working with Sherry Matthews Advertising, staff of the HIV/STD Health Resources Division will use this information to develop targeted messages to encourage pregnant women at risk for HIV infection to seek early prenatal care and HIV testing. *For more information, contact, Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education Branch, at (512) 490-2535, or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Syphilis Elimination Assessment in Dallas County

The Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in conducting a syphilis elimination program assessment for Dallas County. During February, a team of nine individuals from CDC and two TDH program staff members conducted this assessment. The assessment provided a comprehensive review of the Dallas County Health and Human Services Department STD/HIV Program's syphilis elimination activities which include: 1) enhanced surveillance, 2) community involvement and organizational partnerships, and 3) biomedical and behavioral interventions. Outbreak response, clinical and laboratory services, disease intervention and case management, and health promotion were specifically assessed as essential components of biomedical and behavioral interventions. This kind of thorough review would provide critical information for a local technical

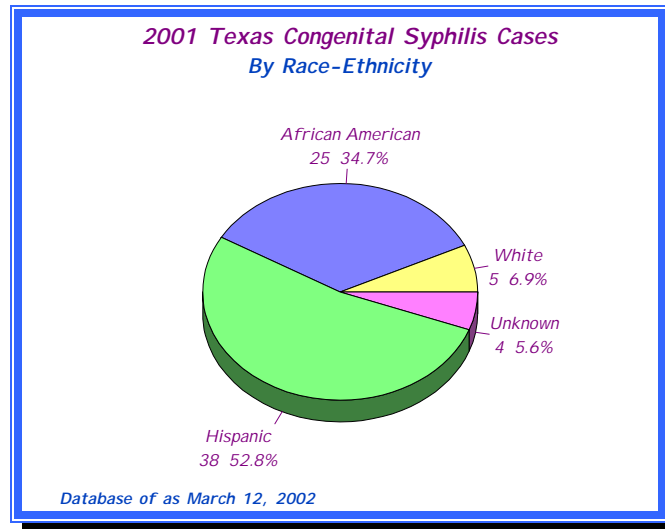
assistance plan. For more information, contact Caeli Paradise, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2515 or e-mail caeli.paradise@tdh.state.tx.us.



Congenital Syphilis Cases Constant.

Congenital syphilis cases reported in 2001 remained almost steady compared to 2000, with 71 cases last year and 72 this year (2001 shown in Figure 1). Hispanic infants made up the majority of the 2001 cases at 53 percent. For more information, contact Sharon K. Melville, at (512) 490-2545 or e-mail sharon.melville@tdh.state.tx.us.

Figure 1



STD Awareness Airs on Texas Radio

The HIV/STD Health Resources Division prepared a fact sheet on STDs to be distributed in letters mailed to TDH job applicants during the month of April for STD Awareness Month. Also, a representative was interviewed for a Texas Medical Association radio report for STD Awareness Month that will be broadcast by radio stations around the State during April. For more information, contact Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education Branch, at (512) 490-2535, or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.



Interagency Coordinating Council on HIV and Hepatitis.

The Interagency Coordinating Council on HIV and Hepatitis met on March 8. The Council reviewed and approved a new website that will allow customers of the participating agencies to obtain information about services provided to people with HIV and/or hepatitis disease through a single entry point. A subcommittee of the Council will proceed with web design and present this to the Council at future meetings. For more information, contact Linda Moore, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.



Physician Assistants May Now Enroll Independently.

Physician Assistants may now enroll independently (without a physician signature) in the Texas Vaccines for Children Program (TVFC), expanding the signature authority to Medical Doctors, Doctors of Osteopathy, Certified Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners. For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284, or email jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.



Texas Vaccines for Children Program expands site visits

Currently the TVFC contracts with the Texas Medical Foundation to do educational and monitoring site visits in private providers' offices enrolled in the TVFC in larger metropolitan areas. In January of 2003, the TVFC plans to expand the contract statewide and has secured federal dollars from the CDC for this expansion. All clinics in Texas enrolled in the TVFC will receive a site visit annually. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284, or email jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Update on Td Vaccine Availability.

The Immunization Division was informed on March 26, that additional Td vaccine might be available by June. This is the first optimistic information the division has received from the manufacturer in many months. The manufacturer asked that TDH not make any changes to the current deferment for the booster dose until we receive additional information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The update from CDC would not be expected until late May or early June. *For more information, contact Judi Chase, Immunization Division, Vaccine Management Section, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6266 or e-mail judi.chase@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Food Biosecurity Symposium.

Staff from the Bureau of Food and Drug Safety recently participated in a Food Biosecurity Seminar in New Orleans sponsored by the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO). Presenters included the head of the Terrorism/ Counterterrorism Section of the FBI from Washington, D.C., the Biosecurity/bioterrorism group leaders from the FDA and USDA, the Vice President of the National Food Processors Association who heads up the Washington, D.C. based Alliance for Food Security; the director of the D.C. based "Biological and Chemical Arms Institute," and Dr. Mark Beatty from the Centers for Disease Control, as well as others. Mr. Dan Sowards, Director of our Manufactured Foods Division and the Training Coordinator for AFDO, was responsible for obtaining the speakers, as well as coordinating and moderating the Symposium. *For more information contact Dan Sowards, Manufactured Foods Division, (512) 719-0243 or e-mail dan.sowards@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Environmental Monitoring and Special Projects.

Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP) program completed its move of the facility located at 1921 Cedar Bend. In addition to REP, this facility contained the Calibration Range used to calibrate all of Radiation Control's radiation detection of survey meters used for inspections and emergency response. The majority of the radioactive sources from this facility were transferred to the Hazardous Materials Building on TDH's Central Campus near the radioactive material down-hole storage. These sources included three large calibration sources and small sources used by REP for training. The sources in the Hazardous Materials Building do not significantly raise dose rates to the public outside the building. Two sources were moved to the Exchange Building. One of the sources at the Exchange is a large calibrator used to calibrate high range detectors used by firemen, police, and EMS first responders. This calibrator is well shielded and has many interlocks to prevent exposure to the source by personnel. It should not affect dose rates to the public. *For more information, contact Ruben K. Cortez, Radiation Safety Officer, Radiation Control, at (512) 8340-6688, ext. 2004 or e-mail ruben.cortez@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Conferences / Training



Alcohol & Tobacco Leadership Conference.

The Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control, in conjunction with the Region 5 Education Service Center hosted the third annual Alcohol and Tobacco Leadership Conference in Beaumont. This was an all day event with approximately 125 students from rural school districts attending. *For more information, contact Dr Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention at (512) 458-7200 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Clinical Records Conference.

On April 4-5, there were 72 clinical records staff from across Texas who participated in the annual TB clinical records conference and workshop held in Austin. *For more information, contact Jeff Taylor, TB Elimination Division, (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jeff.taylor@tdh.state.tx.us.*



World TB Day Activities.

Activities promoting TB knowledge and awareness were held throughout the state on March 24, World TB Day. Activities included:

- a Quarterly CME Conference in Austin devoted to tuberculosis;
- The Dallas TB Elimination Division staff discussed TB binational and border issues with approximately 30 infection control practitioners, Dallas health department staff, and the media.
- Staff for the University of Texas Health Center-Tyler and the American Lung Association of Texas presented an update on pulmonary diseases in Harlingen on March 22 to 165 participants. Local media in Harlingen interviewed regional staff about TB on March 22.
- The TB Education Center presented a TB update in Fort Worth on March 25 to 60 participants and a TB skin testing workshop on March 26 to 28 participants.
- Tuberculosis educational materials were on display in the main library in San Antonio for the month of March. A radio news release was prepared in cooperation with the TDH Communications Office. The region 6/5S office held a World TB Day event on March 26 to raise awareness of TB.
- A press conference was held in El Paso on March 25 to highlight special TB screening activities to take place March 25-27. The screening program collected sputum samples from 267 people considered at high risk for TB. Five individuals had samples indicating likely TB disease and were subsequently started on four anti-tuberculosis medicines. *For more information, contact Ann Tyree, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail ann.tyree@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Birth Defects Conference.

The Texas Birth Defects Conference 2002 was held in Ft. Worth March 7-8. Senator Mike Moncrief opened the conference with an impassioned speech about the need for supporting public health infrastructure. The conference occurred amidst major media coverage on the Trust for America's Health report on the state of birth defects registries in the U.S. Because of the coincidental timing and Senator Moncrief's appearance, additional media coverage was generated locally focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the Texas Birth Defects Registry, and recent funding challenges. *For more information, or copies of the conference proceedings and news articles, contact Amy Case at (512) 458-7232 or e-mail amy.case@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Osteoporosis Awareness Campaign.

The TDH Osteoporosis Program is conducting its annual awareness campaign, which will begin in May and continue through August. The Program is working with the Office of Communications to promote osteoporosis awareness with radio news releases, and Messages on Hold that run in TDH central and regional offices. The Bureau of Human Resources is including a message about osteoporosis on employee earnings statements and a flyer about bone health for children in letters sent to TDH applicants. The Program is collaborating with the Breast and Cervical Cancer Program and the Perinatal Health Program to distribute osteoporosis materials throughout the state. The Texas Alliance for Healthier Communities, within the Texas Volunteer Health Corps, is incorporating information on osteoporosis in their Healthy Neighborhood Tool Chest. The Corporation for National Service is providing TDH print materials to Senior Corps project directors across the state for use in their orientation and monthly in-service training. Motorola will be including information on osteoporosis prevention in their health awareness activities. Information on osteoporosis is also being dispersed throughout Austin to HEB store pharmacies and the People's Pharmacy. *For more information, contact Gina Baber, Osteoporosis Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6619 or e-mail gina.baber@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Continuing Our Journey Toward Cultural Competency (CC).

An intensive three-day Training of Trainers (TOT) was held. This three-day training of trainers was the seventh annual Training of Trainers and is a collaborative effort of the CDC, HIV/STD Prevention Training Centers (PTC), AIDS Education and Training Centers (AETC), and Family Planning Regional Training Centers (RTC). Two trainers from the Minnesota Department of Corrections conducted the training. Twenty-four persons from around the United States and Puerto Rico participated in the training. *For more information, contact Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education Branch, at (512) 490-2535, or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Training for Nurses.

A two-hour training was developed as a result of recent legislation requiring all licensed nurses in the state of Texas to participate in no less than two hours of continuing education related to hepatitis C. HIV/STD Health Resources Division staff collaborated with the TDH Public Health Nursing Continuing Education Service to develop the training and to complete the necessary forms for receiving certification to provide continuing education hours. The course is designed to assist nurses in analyzing client risk and circumstances to assist them in selecting appropriate HCV transmission risk reduction options, interpreting HCV laboratory results, and identifying appropriate interventions and treatment options. *For more information, contact Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education, at (512) 490-2535 or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Guest Speaker - HIV Prevention Training in Karungu, Kenya.

Sherri Stiles, an Austin social worker, shared her experiences with staff from the Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention on February 19, 2002. She has been providing HIV prevention training in Karungu, Kenya, to hospital personnel for six months. The hope is for the trained personnel, in turn, to share the information with their communities and villages in an effort to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS. *For more information, contact Jay Todd, Manager, HIV/STD Training and Public Education Branch, at (512) 490-2535 or e-mail jay.todd@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Communication and Training Customer Service Telephone Calls.

The Communication and Training (CAT) customer service technicians answer over 4000 calls each month. The technician's research immunization histories, direct calls to other programs within the division, and answer general immunization questions. Since April 2001, the Communication and Training section began tallying calls on a monthly basis to monitor the volume of incoming calls. In 2001, CAT received nearly 45, 000 calls from Texans regarding immunization information. A typical telephone call may involve questions regarding school requirements, the recommended immunization schedule, new vaccine information, vaccine availability, as well as vaccine safety issues. Since the events of September 11th, Texans have contacted us for additional information on issues like Anthrax, Smallpox, and Bioterrorism. *For more information, contact Janie Garcia, Immunization Division, Consumer Information and Information Specialist, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail janie.garcia@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Enforcement Conferences.

Since February, the Bureau of Food and Drug Safety has conducted seven enforcement conferences and two compliance meetings with the various divisions. Violations included failure to obtain licenses; failure to ensure that no consumer was allowed to use a tanning device more than once in a 24 hour period; failure to provide protective eyewear in the immediate proximity of a tanning device; failure to measure strength of sanitizing solution; failure to follow hand wash procedures; failure to clean equipment in retail establishments; and failure to screen against pest control, evidence of rodents and building in disrepair in manufactured food establishments. One enforcement conference was conducted to reconsider the denial of an application for a narcotic drug treatment facility. Three demand letters were sent to firms who were delinquent in payment of administrative penalties and investigative and administrative costs. Twelve Agreed Orders were signed by the Associate Commissioner for Consumer Health Protection, and eleven milk and dairy permits were suspended. *For more information, contact Derek Jakovich, Licensing and Enforcement Division, Bureau of Food and Drug Safety, at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail derek.jakovich@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regional Updates

Public Health Region 1



Public Health Preparedness planning underway.

Region 1 staff members are working on the public health preparedness and response planning process with the 35 counties in the region, which do not have a local public health department. Meetings have been held with the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission and the South Plains Association of Governments to discuss plans to develop bioterrorism readiness and response. County officials and regional staff have worked to identify county needs and deficiencies. Region 1 will be receiving approximately \$1.09 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to assist the 35 counties with their planning process. *For more information, contact Jon Huss, Deputy Regional Director, at (806) 767-0479, or e-mail jon.huss@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Volunteer EMS shortage.

Region 1 Emergency Medical Service (EMS) staff have been working with EMS providers to alleviate a significant shortage of certified and licensed EMS personnel in many rural areas. For a variety of reasons, including declining populations, inadequate local funds to support full-time EMS, fear of disease exposure, and the increase of legal liability, some small towns have not been able to provide full-time EMS coverage. They have also not been able to maintain a large enough volunteer staff to run their ambulances. In fact, volunteer pools for EMS have been declining statewide for the past several years. Region 1 staff members are working with communities to find ways to attract new personnel and to make EMS training courses available. *For more information, contact Terry Bavousett, Regional EMS director, at (806) 655-7151, or e-mail terry.bavousett@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 2/3



Critical Issues in Childhood Immunization.

On April 11, a half-day workshop for medical professionals was held. It was sponsored by Immunize Kids! Dallas Area Partnership and Texas Medical Association in partnership with the Dallas County Medical Society. The purpose was to assist the clinician to effectively provide pediatric immunizations and stay current with surveillance and reporting issues. Nearly 100 medical professionals attended the workshop. The workshop provided a maximum of 3 hours in Category 1 credit toward AMA Physician's Recognition Award and 3 hours of Type 2 training for nurses. Region 2/3 Immunization Program Manager, Becky Cook, member of the Immunize Kids! Dallas Area Partnership, co-presented with Evangeline Reynolds, RN, Dallas County Department of Health and Human Services with the "Immunization Update" for nurses. The other presenters included Jane D. Siegel, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, Joseph A. Bocchini, MD, Professor of Pediatrics Louisiana Health Sciences Center, Shreveport, James Brien, DO, Chief, Pediatric Infectious Diseases, Scott & White Hospital, Temple, and William M. Cassidy, MD, Associate Professor, LSU Health Sciences Center, Baton Rouge. Moderator was Jan Pelosi, TDH Immunization, Austin. Registrations for "Upshot" were collected from the attendees. Nancy Garrett, TDH PHR 2/3 Immunization Program Specialist, prepared the "Immunize Update" presentation and training certificates for the nurses. *For more information, contact Becky Cook at (817) 264-479 or e-mail becky.cook@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rabies Vaccination Requirements.

A Public Hearing on the TDH Annual Rabies Vaccination Requirement occurred at the Arlington Community Center on April 18th. Eighteen 18 people attended. The audience consisted of veterinarians, Animal Control Agencies, City and County governments, pet owners, and other interested parties. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley, at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 4 & 5 North



Bioterrorism Grant Planning.

During the past few weeks, Regions 4/5 North staff has been meeting with local county officials and local public health departments to provide information about the grant applications for Public Health Preparedness and Response for Bioterrorism funding. Meetings were held at each Council of Governments in the region: Ark-Texas COG, East Texas COG and Deep East Texas COG. Local Health Department directors and administrators have met and are in touch through weekly conference calls. Additionally, the regional staff is working with officials at the University of Texas Health Center in Tyler and with Austin lab staff to establish a laboratory at the health center. *For more information, contact Dr. Paul McGaha, Regional Director, at (903), 533-5264 or e-mail paul.mcgaha@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 6 & 5 South



Bioterrorism.

The Epidemiologist and Public Health Technician positions for the regional bioterrorism response team have been filled. Interviews for the nurse position will be conducted on April 30th. Team members and other regional staff had a meeting with local health departments on April 9th to discuss bioterrorism funding criteria and to clarify the roles of the local health departments and the regional office in enhancing disease surveillance and bioterrorism preparedness in the region. There have also been individual meetings held with health departments and county officials to facilitate discussion and cooperation in those counties where there are two or more health departments. Regional staff is moving forward in planning to provide for those counties without a local health department. *For more information, contact Brian Rutherford, Regional Customer Service Representative, at (713) 767-3010 or e-mail brian.rutherford@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 7



Burnet County Focus Group.

On April 4, the Immunization Program of Region 7 conducted a Focus Group in Burnet County to address immunization barriers. Stakeholders were invited because of their key role in immunization practices; they included: school nurses, the public health nurse, physicians, clinical nurses, headstart directors, daycare directors, the Burnet City Fire Department Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and local pharmacist. The participation by the group was enthusiastic. *For more information, contact Lynn Ponsonby at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail lynn.ponsonby@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Recent communicable disease outbreaks in two counties of Region 7 provided an opportunity for various program staff to operationalize plans for a Regional Emergency Response Team (ERT). A team of multiple-program staff preparing and responding to bioterrorism, outbreaks of infectious disease and other public health threats and emergencies, has been a concept long proposed by Region 7. Programs represented on the ERT are STD/HIV, Tuberculosis, Immunizations, Public Health Nursing, Emergency

Medical Services, Epidemiology, Zoonosis, and Administration. The goal of the ERT is to be able to rapidly respond with a diverse and highly trained group of staff to an unfolding public health event in a community. All responses will be planned and coordinated with local interests to mitigate the impact of the event on the community as a whole. *For more information contact Pat Collins, at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail pat.collins@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Smoke-free Café.

On March 1, the famous BlueBonnet Café in Marble Falls made the decision to go smoke-free. Owner stated, “quite honestly, I got tired of smelling the smoke.” Another reason for going smoke-free was the owners concern for the impact of the second-hand smoke on his patrons and employees. On April 4, the Regional Director and staff from the regional office, students from Marble Falls High School and Middle School, and Marble Falls Mayor Pro-tem were on hand to honor the business owner for making his restaurant smoke-free. *For more information, contact Sylvia Barron at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail sylvia.barron@tdh.state.tx.us.*

The City of Waco will consider passing a smoke-free ordinance on May 7, 2002. San Marcos and Round Rock coalitions are currently working on smoke-free ordinances for their communities. *For more information, contact Sylvia Barron at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail sylvia.barron@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rabies Prevention Program.

On April 11, the Region 7 Zoonosis Control Veterinarian presented a rabies prevention program to 100+ ranchers and wildlife trappers gathered in Lampasas during a “Predator Control” workshop. The participants came from several counties, including Lampasas, San Saba, Bell, and Hamilton. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2450 or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 8



Local Public Health Leadership Forum.

Local Health Department Directors and staff were present on March 28, 2002, when Region 8 hosted a quarterly Local Public Health Leadership Forum in San Antonio. Topics of discussion included the Grant Application for Local Public Health Preparedness and Response for Bioterrorism and the Texas Association of Local Health Officials (TALHO) Peer Review Project. *For more information, contact Kathy Shields, Public Health Promotions, at (210) 949-2073 or e-mail kathleen.shields@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Consolidation of Warehouse activities.

Region 8 warehouse activities were consolidated with the Texas Center for Infectious Disease (TCID) in San Antonio effective April 1. *For more information, contact Anita Martinez, Deputy Regional Director, at (210) 949-2003, e-mail anita.martinez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



First Lady of Texas.

First Lady of Texas, Anita Perry was in San Antonio on April 17, promoting immunizations. Joining her in support of this initiative were TDH Board Member, Mr. Raymond Hannigan, Debra Stabeno, and representatives from Region 8, San Antonio

Metropolitan Health Department and the community. *For more information, contact Anita Martinez, Deputy Regional Director at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail anita.martinez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



San Antonio Water System (SAWS) customers.

Notice was sent to San Antonio Water System (SAWS) customers in the River Road Subdivision on April 16, regarding a “cross connection” between the new recycled water line being installed at the golf course and an old sprinkler line connected to the drinking water system. SAWS is working with Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) and SAMHD in the resolution of this issue. Region 8 is providing support as requested. Local legislators and other elected officials are closely involved in the process. *For more information, contact Anita Martinez, Deputy Regional Director at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail anita.martinez@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 11



Texas-Tamaulipas Border Communications Network.

The Communications network is in operation between sister city pairs in Tamaulipas and Region 11, a dream toward which we have been working for five years. The information services team from the United States - Mexico Border Health Commission visited sites in Matamoros and Brownsville to partner with Tamaulipas, Region 11, and local public health to further implement the Network and develop a webpage. This has the potential to improve funding and strengthen gaps in the (HAN) for border counties.

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Proposal for a Border Safe Drinking Water Project in Hidalgo County. This grant in conjunction with TAMU in College Station is to develop and implement training activities for health workers (Promotoras), and to train health professionals on safe drinking water concepts and disease reporting. The grant creates a tracking system for water related illnesses in Hidalgo County.

Economically Distressed Area Program (EDAP) – The Office of Border Health, General Sanitation Division conducted a major study of nuisance findings (a nuisance dangerous to health from water supply or sanitation problems) in 200 colonias near Mission and McAllen. *For more information, contact Ramiro Gonzales, Environmental and Consumer Health Director, at (956) 423-0130 ext 637 or e-mail ramiro.gonzales@tdh.state.tx.us.*



La Joya Water Supply Corporation.

Based on the findings the La Joya Water Supply Corporation will construct two wastewater treatment plants and collection systems to provide first-time service to approximately 50,000 colonia residents in western Hidalgo County. This is major progress in an area with the largest numbers of new colonias and the poorest conditions in the United States. Also, in Cameron County more than 1,500 families in three colonias near Brownsville will get wastewater services for first time under a \$3.7 million hook-up project. *For more information, contact Ramiro Gonzales, Environmental and Consumer Health Director, at (956) 423-0130, ext 637 or e-mail ramiro.gonzales@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Tuberculosis Signs and Symptoms.

A presentation on Tuberculosis Signs and Symptoms in Weslaco, for a Sunday morning show on March 17, was given by Domingo Navarro, for Hispanic families residing on both sides of the border in coordination with World TB Day. *For more information, contact Domingo J. Navarro, TB Elimination Program Manager, at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail domingo.navarro@tdh.state.tx.us.*



“Tamaulipas Sin Tuberculosis” conference.

This TB Binational Conference was sponsored by the Mexican Ministry of Health on March 26 in awareness of World TB Day. The Commissioner, Dr. Hector Lopez Gonzalez, and the jurisdictional health directors for the State of Tamaulipas attended with 300 medical professionals. Included was an “Overview of Tuberculosis in the U.S., Texas and Region 11.” by Domingo Navarro. *For more information, contact Domingo J. Navarro, TB Elimination Program Manager, at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail domingo.navarro@tdh.state.tx.us.*